STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
MAINE FOREST SERVICE
168 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

AMANDA E. BEAL
COMMISSIONER

January 28, 2021

To facilitate response by towns and/ or their residents, I am in touch to provide notice of low or trace detected populations of Browntail Moth (BTM). MFS conducts annual BTM surveys and in the last several years, we have seen a dramatic increase in the BTM population.

Browntail moth caterpillars have hairs that can cause a rash similar to poison ivy and respiratory distress in sensitive individuals. The hairs persist for years and can continue to cause problems when mowing or other activities stir them up.

In late-summer 2020, particularly in Waldo, Knox, Kennebec, Cumberland, and Androscoggin Counties, there was enough damage from just-hatched caterpillars that it could be mapped from the air (see attached map). This mapping and other surveys indicate that populations are very high in parts of some towns and abundant enough to cause significant discomfort in a far broader area.

The overwintering web survey is currently being conducted and results will be available in early spring. The survey is conducted from the roadside in areas that have experienced problems in the past and expands outward to define the generally affected area. None of the surveys are exhaustive; to understand BTM populations and the risk of encountering hairs at a finer scale, people need to check the trees around them. **Now is the best time to do that**.

The MFS BTM website* has more information, including:

- Description of the BTM and how to control it
- Survey resources, including what the overwintering webs look like,
- A list of Licensed Pesticide Applicators who conduct browntail moth control work—those interested in hiring contractors for management should make contacts in the winter due to high demand for services,
- Topics ranging from biology to management to State Law specific to BTM control near marine waters, are found in the frequently asked questions page.

Towns can help their residents and visitors avoid unnecessary contact with hairs by providing information about this pest and encouraging and conducting management where practical. The MFS can provide technical advice and assistance for identification and management and an informational brochure for electronic distribution and at-home printing, a limited number of printed informational brochures are also available.

In closing, I strongly encourage you to provide information about this pest to your town residents and visitors to help raise their awareness of this pest and reduce contact with their hairs.

Sincerely,
Thomas Schmeelk
Forest Entomologist
Maine Forest Service, ACF
Thomas.schmeelk@maine.gov

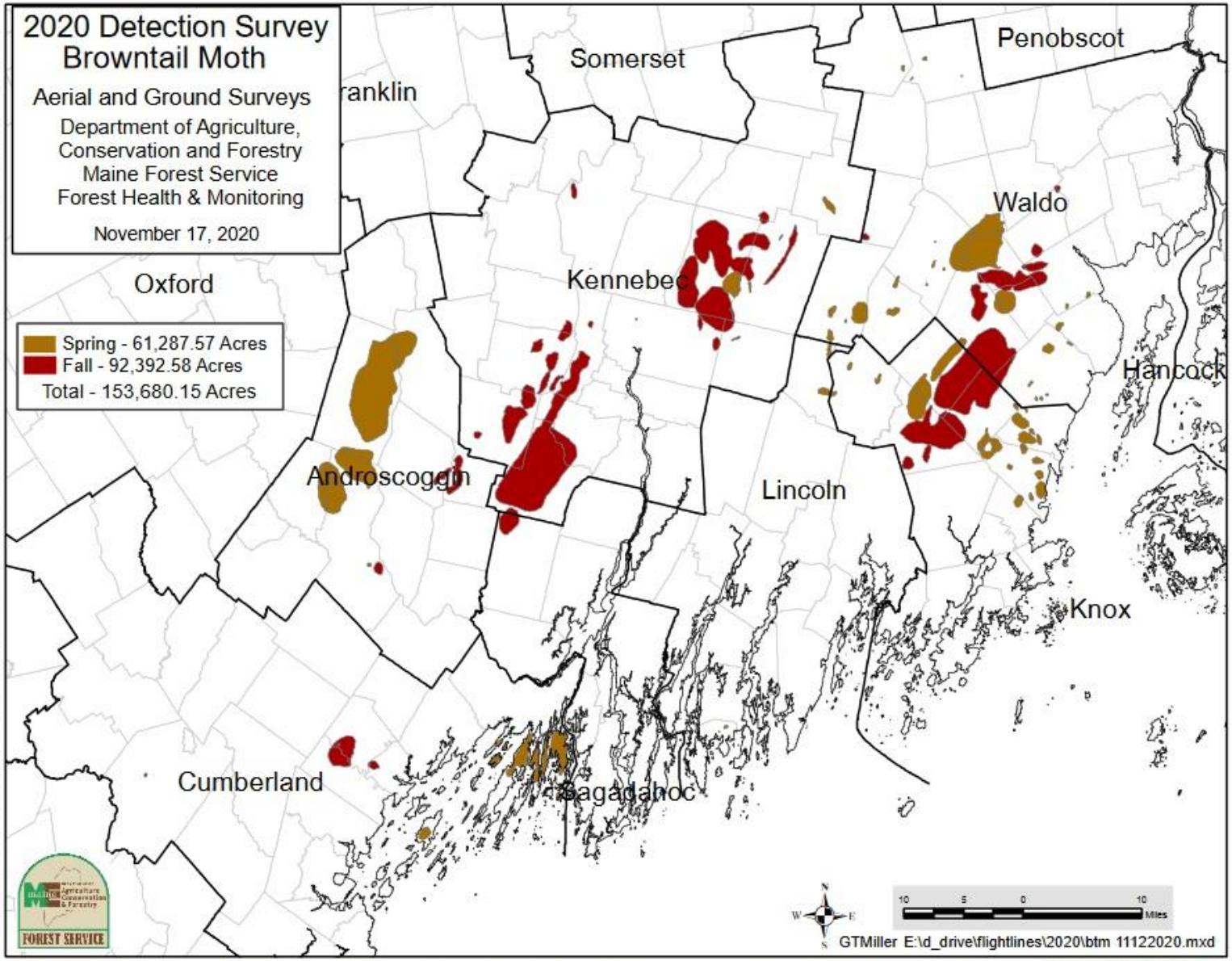
*http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/invasive_threats/browntail_moth_info.htm

PATTY CORMIER, DIRECTOR
MAINE FOREST SERVICE
18 ELKINS LANE, HARLOW BUILDING

DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture Conservation & Forestry

PHONE: (207) 287-2791
WWW.MAINEFORESTSERVICE.GOV
TTY USERS CALL MAINE RELAY 711

Town	Acres
Albion	395
Appleton	9,574
Auburn	7,220
Augusta	1,602
Belfast	1,545
Belgrade	298
Belmont	2,257
Boothbay Harbor	50
Bowdoin	1,445
Bristol	2
Brunswick	102
Burnham	62
Camden	1,783
Chebeague Island	476
China	3,201
Cumberland	1,376
Freedom	168
Greene	457
Harpswell	5,402
Hope	6,905
Knox	2,100
Leeds	2,493
Liberty	533
Lincolnville	1,469
Litchfield	15,951
Long Island	13
Manchester	2,705
Minot	1,799
Monmouth	4,230
Montville	1,838
Morrill	7,389
North Yarmouth	1,429
Northport	196
Palermo	1,651
Portland	14
Readfield	409
Rockland	318
Rockport	2,376
Searsmont	9,549
Somerville	513
Standish	32
Swanville	73
Troy	80
Turner	16,271
Union	8,648
Vassalboro	17,322
Waldo	512
Wales	2,216
Washington	374
West Gardiner	3,175
Windsor	488
Winslow	291
Winthrop	2,621
Yarmouth	282



This map has approximate locations of the most intense 2020 activity by browntail moth caterpillars in Maine. Data are mapped from a small plane. Low populations are not mapped and some areas of moderate to high populations can be missed. There are other areas where people are likely to feel the effects of browntail moth hairs in 2021. Human impacts have been reported in areas with more than 10 overwintering webs per tree, these locations can be easily missed by all surveys. People are encouraged to look at their trees for signs of the overwintering webs (photo, right) of this insect and consider reducing populations where it is feasible. For more information visit: https://www.maine.gov/forestpests#btm